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Mermaids, Leprechauns, and Fomorians: A Middle Irish Account of the Descendants of Cain

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On p. 151 (viii) of Volume 7 of Dublin, Trinity College, MS H.3.18 (1337), we have a short account in Irish of Cain's murder of his brother Abel, his subsequent punishment by God, and his monstrous descendants.[1] This text has excited little comment. It is apparently not cited at all in the substantial body of modern scholarship concerned with medieval accounts of the descendants of Cain. Indeed, aside from a couple of citations in the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* and bald mentions in descriptions of the contents of H.3.18 by T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn and by Liam Breatnach, I have only seen a handful of references, all of them brief, to what Robin Chapman Stacey calls this 'very odd story'.[2] However, despite its brevity, I believe it can shine a little light into one corner of the medieval Irish project to synthesize inherited tradition with mainstream European learning. It has no title in the manuscript, and I shall subsequently refer to it as 'Cain and Abel'. In the edition below, I have silently expanded standard manuscript abbreviations, capitalized, punctuated, and added accents on long vowels. The translation is my own:

> Cáiin didiu ro-formdig re hAibel, co ndecaig spirat mallachtnach ina cride, 7 is de ro-len íarmairt tsáraigthe an coimdhe dia athair 7 dia máthair a Parrtus; úair is é

[1]Printed in *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, edited by D. A. Binchy, 6 vols with single pagination (Dublin, 1978), p. 682, lines 1–15. [2]*Dictionary of the Irish Language*, compact edition, edited by E. G. Quin (Dublin, 1983), pp. 415, s.v. *iuchair* and 444, s.v. *Iuchorpán* (available online at www.dil.ie); T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1921), p. 361; Liam Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, Early Irish Law Series, 5 (Dublin, 2005), p. 30; Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, 'The Leipreachán and Fairies, Dwarfs and the Household Familiar: A Comparative Study', *Béaloideas*, 52 (1984), 75–150 (p. 77) (Ó Giolláin apparently did not consult the text himself, but merely quoted from *DIL*); Robin Chapman Stacey, 'Law and Literature in Medieval Ireland and Wales', in *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, edited by Helen Fulton (Dublin, 2005), pp. 65–82 (pp. 70–71 (quotation on p. 71)); eadem, *Dark Speech: The Performance of Law in Early Ireland* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007), p. 276, n. 163.

in Cáiin-sin .c.gin clainne Ádaim, 7 óir nach dernnatar lorgnírmarta isin sárugud-sin tucsat airan coimde, ro-len do prímgin na clainne in esgaine-sin, do Cáiin. Aibel didiu in dara mac, 7 is aire rop ennag 7 idan é: ar us íar pennait 7 éraic 7 lorgnim d'Ádam [MS. *áam*] rugad é. Do-delb Día .5. cnuic ar Cáiin íar marbad Aibel .i. cnoc ina édan, 7 cnoc cechtar a dá gruaid, 7 cnoc cechtar a dá láim; do comarta tucad-sin do síl Ádaim 7 do desmerecht doib an fill do-rigni [MS *dorignid*] Cáiin; 7 do-sáraigh Día ar clainn Ádaim [MS *áaim*] cona derndaois clemnus nó cairdes re clainn Cáiin nó go críndis uili. Ambia ingen Cáiin .i. delb mná fuirri 7 eithre éisg lé; cuma ro-imdhegh-si muir 7 tír; co roibe fecht ann ina codlud fon muir gur sgéth brec a iuchra ina bél gur ba torrach de sin, co rug días ar .xx.it do clainn .i. días fa ro-mór méd 7 xx. do min-clainn in ingin .i. Fomoir in fer 7 Ispela an ingen; is [MS *i*] de ro-cét:

> Beg mac bric, builid a bunn,
> Mac is luga do-bí ann.
> Becnait, ba sí in rígan rán
> Ó táid líne luprucán.

Cain furthermore was jealous of Abel, and an evil spirit went into his heart, and because of that the result of the outraging of the Lord by his father and by his mother in Paradise followed; because the aforementioned Cain is the first born of the children of Adam, and because they did not do recompenses for that outrage which they committed upon the Lord, that curse followed onto the first born of the children, to Cain. Abel furthermore was the second son, and he was a chieftain who was innocent and pure: because he was born after Adam had done penance and compensation and recompense. God created five lumps on Cain after the killing of Abel, i.e. a lump on his forehead, and a lump on each of his two cheeks, and a lump on each of his two hands; this was put as a sign for the offspring of Adam and as an example to them on account of the murder that Cain had done; and God prevailed upon the children of Adam not to have relations or friendship with the children of Cain or they would all wither. Ambia daughter of Cain, i.e. she had the shape of a woman and the tail of a fish; so she could travel the sea and the land; and she was once sleeping under the sea and a trout squirted its spawn into her mouth so that there was fruit of that, and she gave birth to twenty-two children, i.e. two who were of very great size and twenty small children of the girl, i.e. Fomoir was the man and Ispela the girl. It was sung concerning that:

> Bec son of a trout, ?fair his foot,[3]
> The smallest boy there was.
> Becnait, she was the splendid queen
> From whom is the line of the leprechauns.

As regards the text's date, I noted the following diagnostic linguistic features (I do not claim this to be an exhaustive list): confusion of lenited *d* and *g* (e.g. *–decaig* 'went' for Old Irish *–dechuid*);[4] initial /k/ > /g/ in pro-

[3]The meaning of *builid* is uncertain. It often occurs in alliterative constructions, and from the context it must have a laudatory meaning — see *DIL*, p. 90, s.v. *builid*. [4]See T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Notes on Middle Irish Pronunciation', *Hermathena*, 44 (1926),

clitics (e.g. *go* 'so that' for OIr. *co* (but note *co* in the first line));[5] pretonic /l/ > /r/, e.g. *in dara* 'the second, the other' < OIr. *ind ala*;[6] loss of final /ð/ in an unstressed syllable (e.g. genitive singular *coimdhe* 'lord' for OIr. *coimded*);[7] comparative form of the adjective in place of the superlative (e.g. *is luga* 'smallest' < OIr. *as lugam*);[8] confusion of the prepositions *ar* 'in front of' and *for* 'on';[9] *re* 'against' < OIr. *fri*;[10] the simple verb *imthigid* in place of the Old Irish compound *imm-téit* 'travels';[11] confusion between past active and past passive verbal stem (e.g. *–dernnatar* 'they did' instead of OIr. *–deirgénsat*);[12] *do* instead of *ro* as a marker of the past (originally perfect) tense (e.g. *do-delb* 'created', *do-sáraigh* 'prevailed', *do-bí* 'was').[13] These developments all belong to Middle Irish, that is, the language of the period spanning the early tenth century to the late twelfth.

H.3.18, now bound in 25 volumes, is a vast composite manuscript containing texts copied by various scribes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It principally contains legal material emanating from the school of the Mac Egans of Connacht and Co. Tipperary.[14] 'Cain and Abel' occurs in a booklet of twenty un-numbered pages, roughly half the size of the majority of the manuscript's pages, bound in between pages 151 and 152. This corresponds to pp. 151 (i) – (xix) in Binchy's edition (the twentieth page of the booklet is blank).[15] Liam Breatnach lists the contents as follows (the numbers refer to page and line in *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*):

152–95 (pp. 163–95); cf. Liam Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', in *Stair na Gaeilge in ómós do Pádraig Ó Fiannachta*, edited by Kim McCone and others (Maynooth, 1994), pp. 221–333 (pp. 234–35); Kim McCone, *A First Old Irish Grammar and Reader Including an Introduction to Middle Irish*, Maynooth Medieval Irish Texts, 3 (Maynooth, 2005), p. 177. [5]See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', pp. 235–36; McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 177. [6]See ibid., p. 187. [7]See Liam Breatnach, 'The First Third of *Bretha Nemed Toisech*', *Ériu*, 40 (1989), 1–40 (p. 3); McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 178. [8]See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', pp. 255–56; McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 185. [9]See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', pp. 326–27; McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 190. [10]See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', pp. 327–28; McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 190. [11]See Kim McCone, *The Early Irish Verb*, second edition (Maynooth, 1997), p. 192; idem, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 210. [12]See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', p. 308; McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, pp. 208–9. [13]See Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', p. 280; McCone, *First Old Irish Grammar*, p. 212. A linguistic curio, which does not seem to me to have much value in terms of dating the text, is the apparently masculine genitive singular form *in ingin* 'the girl' (cf. masculine and neuter *o*-stem genitives in /-C'/) rather than the expected *na ingine*. [14]See Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, pp. 358–62; an index of the texts from it which are printed in *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* can be found in Breatnach, *Companion*, pp. 26–47. On the date, see Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, p. 358; L. Bieler and G. MacNiocaill, 'Fragment of an Irish Double Psalter with Glosses in the Library of Trinity College Dublin,' *Celtica*, 5 (1960), 28–39 (p. 28). [15]*Corpus Iuris Hibernici*,

679.1: On contracts, beginning *Cor dā sochann co fis 7 trebaire.*
680.19: *Córus Íubaile* (D) [...]
682.1: A passage on Cain and Abel.
682.16: Citations with commentary on a variety of topics, including evidence (682.16, 683.24) and legal entry (682.33, 683.1); the latter two citations are from *S[enchas] M[ár]* 2, *11. Din Techtugud.* [There is a] reference to *Fothae Breth* in 682.32 [...]
684.22: A status-text closely related to the commentary on *Uraicecht Becc* [...]
687.37: *Cáin Fuithirbe* [...], with extraneous matter on wounding in 688.30–689.16. Additional cross references are: 689.15 = 1977.41; 690.21 = 1311.38, 1478.3 (*O'Dav[oren's Glossary]* 311).[16]

Although I have examined a microfilm copy of the manuscript, I have not made a detailed study of the hands of this booklet, nor am I qualified to do so. However, more than one scribe was certainly involved. The script of 'Cain and Abel' is neater and larger than that of the following collection of citations, but I cannot be sure that the hand is different. I am confident, however, that the preceding text, extracts from the Old Irish tract *Córus Íubaile* ('The Ordering of Limitation Periods'), is in a different hand. In particular, I noticed the very different shape of the letter **d** in the two texts: in *Córus Íubaile* the stem slopes to the left at a 45° angle, whereas in 'Cain and Abel' (and in the following text) it is horizontal. There is no obvious thematic unity between the texts copied into this section of the manuscript. We seem to be looking at a notebook in which several scribes copied legal material from a number of different sources, some of them identified by Liam Breatnach. That 'Cain and Abel' is a fragment of a longer text seems likely on account of the word *didiu* 'furthermore' in the opening sentence. But why was it included alongside all this legal material? Irish law texts abound with 'cases' featuring legendary or pseudo-historical characters. Normally these are drawn from the native tradition (Cú Chulainn, Find mac Cumaill, and so forth), but occasionally biblical characters make an appearance. The first part of 'Cain and Abel' treats the Fall of man as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden using the early Irish legal vocabulary of injury (*sárugud*) and compensation (*éraic*), as Robin Chapman Stacey has pointed out.[17] Another reference to the story of the Fall in the early Irish legal tradition occurs in the Introduction to the collection of law texts known as the *Senchas Már* 'Great Tradition' — here a disadvantageous contract is exemplified by Adam exchanging the entire world for an apple![18]

The abrupt introduction of Cain's daughter Ambia marks a change,

edited by Binchy, pp. 679–90. [16]Breatnach, *Companion*, p. 30; compare the earlier description by Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, pp. 360–61. [17]Stacey, 'Law and Literature', p. 70; see also eadem, *Dark Speech*, p. 276, n. 163. [18]*Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, edited by Binchy, p. 351, lines 27–29. See Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series, 3 (Dublin, 1988), p. 159.

however. The remainder of the text has no obvious legal application. Its affinity is rather with the *genre* of pseudohistory — a body of literature aimed at syncretising native Irish lore with the biblical and classical frameworks of history introduced into Ireland in the early Middle Ages. Why the scribe chose to include it here is a mystery. However, I believe that an examination of its content in comparison with other Irish traditions concerning the descendants of Cain can shed some light on the motivation of its author. The prose account and the poem quoted at the end seem to represent two independent traditions which have been imperfectly harmonized. The poem implies that the giant children Fomoir and Ispela, mentioned in the prose, had two diminutive counterparts, Bec ('little') and Becnait (a feminine diminutive of *bec*),[19] the latter explicitly the ancestor of the *luprucáin* 'leprechauns'. Bec and Becnait are not mentioned in the main body of the text, however — in their place are twenty *min-clann* 'small children', perhaps leprechauns. No mention is made of the giant children's descendants, but the male giant's name, Fomoir, suggests that he is the eponymous ancestor of the Fomorians, the misshapen giants of Irish pseudohistory.[20] Fomoir is not recorded as an ancestor of the Fomorians in the tract *Genelach na Fomore* ('The Genealogy of the Fomorians'), preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B. 502 and the Book of Lecan,[21] but the Fomorians are said to be named after a certain Gumor in a poem from the eleventh-century *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ('The Book of the Taking of Ireland'):

> Cichul mac Guill, gairm co nem,
> mac Gairb, meic Tūathmair tendtigh,
> meic Gūmōir dar muir anair,
> ōn ainmnigter Fomoraig.

[19]These names call to mind Becán and Becnait, the father and mother of the hermit Marbán according to a poem from the tenth-century 'Vision of Mac Con Glinne' (*Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, edited by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson (Dublin, 1990), line 76). However, *Bec(án)* and *Becnait* are genuine medieval Irish names and they may have been chosen independently in the two texts because of their transparent meaning. The same is true of the names of the leprechauns in the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century *Aidedh Ferghusa* ('Death of Fergus'), which include Rigbec mac Róbic, Brigbec mac Buain, and Bec mac Bic (*Silva Gadelica*, edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady, 2 vols (London, 1892), I, 238). [20]The name of the giantess, Ispela, is opaque to me, and does not occur elsewhere, to my knowledge. Perhaps there is an onomastic element here: Dr Mahon drew my attention to the fact that Fomoir and Ispela are conceived *fon muir* 'under the sea' when the trout squirts its spawn into their mother's mouth, *ina bél*. Was the author etymologizing *Ispela* as *isin bél* 'into the mouth', or *is béul* 'under [the] mouth'? Alternatively, could her name be connected with *Isabella*, a name which was popular in Spain, Portugal, and France in the Middle Ages? [21]*Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, I, edited by M. A. O'Brien (Dublin, 1962), pp. 330–33.

> Cicul son of Goll, a shouting with venom, son of Garb, son of fiery Tuathmar, son of Gumor over the sea from the east, from whom the Fomoraig are named.[22]

Gumor is a variant of *Umor*,[23] which could in turn be seen as a variant of *Fomoir*, in view of pairs such as *úar* ~ *fúar* 'cold' and so forth. Thus this stanza may testify obliquely to a tradition in which the Fomorians had an eponymous ancestor.

'Cain and Abel' belongs with a number of early Irish texts which derived native monsters, notably leprechauns and Fomorians, from Cain. This belief was apparently so widespread that one medieval Irish scholar felt the need to repudiate it on the grounds that it seemed to contravene the account of the Flood preserved in the Book of Genesis. In a section of the Middle Irish *Sex Aetatis Mundi* ('Six Ages of the World') entitled 'Do senchus na fomorach 7 na luchorpán 7 na torothur' ('Concerning the history of the Fomoraig and of the Luchorpáin and of the monstrous creatures') we have an account of Noah's curse of his son Ham who witnesses his drunken nakedness. This is basically a paraphrase of Genesis 9, 22–26, although in Genesis 9, 25 Noah curses Ham's son Canaan rather than Ham himself. The section continues:

> Conid hé Cám de-side cét[d]uine ro-mallachad iar ndílinn 7 conid hé comarba Caín iar ndílinn 7 conid huad ro-génatar luchorpáin 7 fomoraig 7 goborchinn 7 cech écosc dodelba archena fil for doínib, 7 conid aire tucad dilgenn for Cannánaib, 7 tucad a ferann do macaib Israhél hi comarthu na mallachtan cétna, ar ropa do síl Cáim do Channánaib.
>
> Conid hé-sin bunad na torothur 7 ní do síl Cháin dóib, amal ad-fiadat Goídil, ar níro-mair ní dia síl-side iar ndílinn, ar rop hé fochonn na dílenn do bádud clainni Caín; 7 ro-báte cid clanna Séth uli immale friu acht Noé cona trí maccaib 7 cona cethri mnáib, amal innises Moísi mac Amra in sein i nGenis rechta …
>
> Thus it was Cham who was the first to be cursed after the Flood, whence he is the successor to Cain after the Flood. And from him sprang the Luchorpáin and the Fomoraig, and the goat-heads,[24] and every kind of ill-shapen species of humanity; and it is for that reason the Chanaanites were destroyed and their land given to the Israelites, as a sign of the self-same curse, for the Chanaanites were of the race of Cham.
>
> That, then, is the origin of the monsters, and they are *not* of the race of Cain, as the Irish say, for none of his line survived the deluge, because the very purpose

[22]*Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, edited and translated by R. A. Stewart Macalister, 5 volumes, Irish Texts Society, 34, 35, 39, 41, and 44 (London, 1938–56), III, 72–73, poem xxxiii, stanza 2. [23]Macalister states that *Gumor* 'is of course merely a corruption, induced by the *c* of the preceding *mac*' (ibid., IV, 4, n. 1). Surely this would have yielded **Cumor* (cf. *Find mac Cumaill* < **Find mac Umaill*). [24]Or perhaps 'horse-heads' (thus John Rhys, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Celtic Heathendom*, The Hibbert Lectures, 1886, second edition (London, 1892), p. 593; James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin, 1955), p. 103; cf. *DIL*, p. 351, s.v. *1. gabor*).

> of the deluge was to drown the race of Cain; and even the whole race of Seth were drowned along with them, except Noah and his three sons and their four wives, as Moses, son of Amra, relates in the Book of Genesis.[25]

Evidence that the Irish believed the leprechauns and Fomorians to be descended from Cain can in fact be found earlier in the *Sex Aetates Mundi* itself:

> Ro-forcongair Dia trá for clannaib Séth náro-chummascdais fri clanna Caín 7 náro-clannaigdis friu 7 ná tucdais mná díb. Tarmi-deochatar dano clanna Séth in forcital-sin 7 tucsat ingena clainni Caín, ar ba mór a caémi, 7 ro-clannaigset friu dar sárugud Dé. Conid de-sin ro-geinset torothuir in domuin .i. fomoraig 7 luchorpáin 7 cech n-écosc torothorda ndodelba ro-buí for doínib.
>
> God commanded, moreover, of the offspring of Seth that they consort not with the families of Cain, and that they should not beget children by them, and that they should not take wives from among them. The family of Seth, however, transgressed that instruction and they took to themselves the daughters of the family of Cain — for they were very beautiful — and they bore children by them in defiance of God. So that it was through that that the monstrous creatures of the world were born, i.e. Fomoraig and Luchorpáin and every horrible, misshapen species of man.[26]

A clearly derivative passage is preserved in Recension C of *Lebor Gabála Érenn*.[27] Further evidence comes from the metrical *Banshenchas* ('Lore of

[25]*The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi*, edited and translated by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Dublin, 1983), §34, pp. 79 and 119. Ó Cróinín's composition date of *c.* 1090 for *Sex Aetates Mundi* derives from his argument, on the basis of an ascription in one manuscript, that Dublittir ua hUathgaile (fl. *c.* 1082 × 1116) was the author of the entire work (ibid., pp. 41–50; see also James Carney, 'The Dating of Early Irish Verse Texts, 500–1100', *Éigse*, 19 (1982–83), 177–216 (p. 189); Hildegard L. C. Tristram, *Sex Aetates Mundi: Die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren — Untersuchungen und Texte*, Anglistiche Forschungen, 165 (Heidelberg, 1985), pp. 311–15), but this is not universally accepted: see, for instance, Charles Donahue, 'Grendel and the *Clanna Cain*', *Journal of Celtic Studies*, 1 (1950), 167–75 (pp. 171–72); Máire Herbert, 'The Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi*: First Editions', *CMCS*, 11 (Summer 1986), 97–112 (pp. 106–8); Edel Bhreathnach, 'Kilfleshin: An Irish Monastery Surveyed', ibid., 27 (Summer 1994), 33–47 (pp. 44–45); Tomás Ó Concheannainn, 'Leabhar na hUidhre: Further Textual Associations', *Éigse*, 30 (1997), 27–91 (pp. 77–79). The inconsistency between §34 ('Do senchus na fomorach') and §17 discussed in this paper weakens Ó Cróinín's argument for textual unity. In what follows, I cite §34 as 'Do senchus na fomorach' and other parts of the text as *Sex Aetates Mundi*. References to 'the author of "Do senchus na fomorach"' are intended to leave open the possibility that this section was originally independent of the rest of *Sex Aetates Mundi*. [26]*Sex Aetates Mundi*, edited and translated by Ó Cróinín, §17, pp. 71 and 113. [27]*Lebor Gabála Érenn*, edited and translated by Macalister, I, 106–7. Macalister calls this version the 'third redaction' — modern scholars favour 'Recension C'. Note that the only manuscript witness to this part of the text (Dublin, Trinity College, H.2.15 (1)) is

Women') by Gilla Mo Dutu (*c.* 1147), where Ambia, daughter of Cain, is said to have borne monstrous children (*torothair*) of unspecified appearance.[28] We might also cite as evidence the Old English poem *Beowulf*, in which the monster Grendel is a descendant of Cain, along with *eotenas* ('ettins'), *ylfe* ('elves'), *orcneas* ('?evil monsters'), and *gigantas* ('giants'), if we accept, as several commentators have suggested, that this passage betrays Irish influence.[29]

The existence of monstrous races of humans was orthodoxy in Ireland in the Middle Ages, as elsewhere. The Irish had native traditions concerning races of people of unusual size or appearance and the learned among them would also have access to popular Latin works such as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* with its famous list of monstrous races (XI.iii).[30] It is noteworthy that the leprechauns, Fomorians, and *goborchinn* mentioned in 'Do senchus na fomorach' seem to have been indigenous to Ireland, although some

rather damaged here, and that the editor has filled in lacunae with the aid of the passage quoted above from *Sex Aetates Mundi*, §17 (see *Lebor Gabála*, edited and translated by Macalister, I, 241). *Lupraganaig* 'leprechauns' are certainly enumerated among the monstrous progeny of Cain, however. Recension C of *Lebor Gabála* must postdate Recension A (Macalister's 'first redaction'), which is assigned on internal evidence to the final quarter of the eleventh century, and it must predate the Book of Ballymote, the earliest manuscript in which it is extant, which was compiled between 1384 and 1406 (R. Mark Scowcroft, 'Mediaeval Recensions of the *Lebor Gabála*', in *Lebor Gabála Érenn: Textual History and Pseudohistory*, edited by John Carey, Irish Texts Society Subsidiary Series, 20 (London, 2009), pp. 1–20 (p. 16)). Thus it almost certainly postdates *Sex Aetates Mundi* and, in view of the frequent association of the two texts in the manuscript tradition (see John Carey, 'The LU Copy of *Lebor Gabála*', ibid., pp. 21–32 (p. 24)), it seems certain that this passage in the *Lebor Gabála* derives from *Sex Aetates Mundi*. [28]'The Ban-Shenchus', edited and translated by Margaret C. Dobbs, *Revue celtique*, 47 (1930), 288–339 (pp. 290 and 316). [29]The relevant passage can be found at lines 99–114 of *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, edited by F. Klaeber, third edition (Boston, 1950). For the question of Irish influence, see Donahue, 'Grendel and the *Clanna Cain*'; Carney, *Studies*, pp. 102–14; Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 68–75. Note, however, the objections of Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'* (London, 1970), pp. 101–2. [30]*Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum*, edited by W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford, 1911), English translation in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, edited by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge, 2006). Later redactions of *Sex Aetates Mundi* clearly show the influence of Isidore's monster list (see below), as does the poem by Dublittir ua hUathgaile in *Sex Aetates Mundi*, edited and translated by Ó Cróinín, §70, pp. 100 (lines 78–89) and 134. Compare the Isidore-inspired list of monstrous descendants of Cain in the Middle High German metrical adaptation of Genesis, the relevant section of which is quoted in Oliver Emerson, 'Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English', *PMLA*, 21 (1906), 831–939 (pp. 883–84).

medieval authors equated leprechauns with Pygmies and Fomorians with Giants,[31] and the *goborchinn* may have been inspired by the classical dog-headed *cynocephali*, mentioned by Isidore, and appearing as *conchinn* in Irish literature alongside the non-Isidorian *goborchinn* and *cattchinn* 'cat-heads'.[32] The origin and affinities of such monsters and specifically how their existence could be harmonized with the teachings of Scripture, which has nothing to say about them aside from a handful of references to Giants (as in Genesis 6, 4), Pilosi 'hairy men' (Isaiah 13, 21), and Pygmies (Ezekiel 27, 11),[33] was a matter of fierce debate in the Middle Ages. In the fifth century St Augustine of Hippo had established that they were part of the wonderful variety of God's creation, rather than being abominations. Furthermore he argued that they were descendants of Adam, and thus possessed of souls and capable of salvation (*De Civitate Dei*, XVI.viii).[34] He was followed in this by the influential Isidore, among others. However, this tolerant attitude was not universally shared, and an equally vital tradition arose which regarded monstrous appearance as the result of God's curse on his sinful and disobedient creations. Monstrous races were sometimes seen as being descended not from Adams's 'good' son Seth, but from that archetypal sinner, the first homicide, Cain.[35]

The doctrine that Cain was the ancestor of monstrous races derives ultimately from apocryphal accounts of the events of Genesis 4 6. The statement in Genesis 4, 15 'And the Lord put a mark on Cain, that whosoever

[31]See, for example, David Greene, 'The Irish Versions of the Letter of Prester John', *Celtica*, 2 (1952–54), 117–45 (p. 121, line 27). [32]See Myles Dillon, 'Notes on Irish Words', *Language*, 17 (1941), 249–53 (pp. 249–51). Compare Hiberno-Latin *Cenophali* [sic] and Middle Welsh *cynbyn*: W. B. Stanford, 'Monsters and Odyssean Echoes in the Early Hiberno-Latin and Irish Hymns', in *Latin Script and Letters A.D. 400–900: Festschrift Presented to Ludwig Bieler*, edited by John J. O'Meara and Bernd Naumann (Leiden, 1976), pp. 113–17; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and others (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33–71 (p. 42, note on p. 65). [33]The latter two are 'more the creation of Jerome's translation than of the Hebrews' according to John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 87. [34]Edition and translation in *Saint Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans*, V, edited by Eva Matthews Sanford and William McAllen Green (London and Cambridge, MA, 1965). [35]For general discussion of medieval attitudes to monsters, see Rudolf Wittkower's excellent article 'Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 159–97; Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodigies: l'insolite au XVI^e siècle, en France*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 158 (Geneva, 1977); Friedman, *Monstrous Races*. For a sensitive but sometimes speculative discussion of aspects of Augustine's doctrine on monsters and its legacy, see Valerie I. J. Flint, 'Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment', *Viator*, 15 (1984), 65–80.

found him should not kill him' was commonly taken to mean that Cain was in some way deformed by God, thus becoming a 'monster' himself. The Bible does not describe the 'mark', but an early Jewish tradition, known in western Europe in the Middle Ages, held that Cain grew horns.[36] Irish texts consistently envisage the mark as a lump or lumps — in the tenth-century *Saltair na Rann* ('The Metrical Psalter'), God puts a single lump on Cain's forehead, which eventually causes his death.[37] A gloss to Recension C of *Lebor Gabála Érenn* also gives Cain one lump, although one manuscript specifies seven lumps: one on his forehead, one on each cheek, one on each foot, and one on each hand.[38] This recalls 'Cain and Abel' in which he has five lumps, one on his forehead, one on each cheek, and one on each hand. The monstrous Cain was then supplied with monstrous descendants by making him the ancestor of the Giants mentioned in Genesis 6, 4, and by extension of other deformed races, well known to medieval European audiences from a myriad of popular literary and artistic sources.[39] Exactly how such apocryphal material came into Irish tradition cannot be recovered, but David Dumville has shown that the Irish churches seem to have been more tolerant of apocrypha than other Western churches, and that a remarkable quantity of them had arrived in Ireland, possibly via Spain, by the Old Irish period.[40]

The author of 'Do senchus na fomorach' rejects the apparently well-established doctrine that monsters are descended from Cain on account of the fact that Cain's descendants should all have been drowned in the Flood. The concept that some parts of the world were unaffected by the Flood was entertained by a minority of early Jewish and Christian writers.[41] Such traditions can be found in medieval Ireland. A gloss on stanza 18 of the Middle Irish poem 'Dúan in choícat cest' ('The Song of the Fifty Questions') states

[36]See Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, p. 96 and references there cited. [37]*The Irish Adam and Eve Story from Saltair na Rann*, edited, translated, and commented on by David Greene and others, 2 vols (Dublin, 1976), I, lines 1997–2004; cf. II, 135. [38]*Lebor Gabála*, edited and translated by Macalister, I, 86–87. [39]See discussions by, among others, Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 8 (1979), 143–62; Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, pp. 87–107; David Williams, *Cain and Beowulf* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 19–39. [40]D. N. Dumville, 'Biblical Apocrypha and the Early Irish: A Preliminary Investigation', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 73 (1973), Section C, 299–338. See also Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin, 1975). Much of Ruth Mellinkoff's discussion of the dissemination of apocryphal material concerning the descendants of Cain in England during the Old English period also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to Ireland: Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny I', pp. 156–62. [41]A useful survey is provided by Ruth Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part II, Post-Diluvian Survival', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 9 (1980), 183–97 (pp. 184–89).

that the *Seiricda*, plausibly interpreted by John Carey as '*Sēres*, Chinese', did not drown in the Flood due, presumably, to their descent from Seir, a son born to Adam and Eve prior to their expulsion from Eden, as explained in a gloss on stanza 12.[42] Nearer to home, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, claiming the authority of the lost Old Irish manuscript Lebor Dromma Snechtai ('The Book of Drumsnat'), relates that the goddess Banba survived the Flood on the peak of a mountain called *Tel Tuinne* 'Peak of the Wave', a claim thought to be *ingantach* 'surprising' by one glossator![43] On the other hand, as *Saltair na Rann* explains, Enoch survived the Flood by flying like a bird from wave to wave.[44] However, the apparent failure of the Flood to drown the sinful seed of Cain was quite a different matter from explaining away the survival of the prelapsarian Chinese, the Otherwordly Banba, and the biblical patriarch Enoch. It was particularly troubling in the light of apocryphal sources which emphasized, much more forcefully than did Scripture, that the Flood was sent specifically to punish Cain's kin.[45] The author of 'Do senchus na fomorach' is careful to point out, quoting the authority of Moses, that Noah, his three sons, and their four wives were the only survivors.

Early Christian exegesis devoted a considerable amount of effort to the question of the survival of evil in general after the Flood, with a popular tradition, expressed by Cassian in the fourth century, holding that prior to the Flood the wicked giant descendants of Cain had instructed Ham in profane arts which he had written on stone and metal so that they would not be destroyed by God's vengeance. Ham was thus a direct link to the evil of Cain's antediluvian offspring and therefore a good candidate for the begetter of postdiluvian monsters.[46] Indeed, the author of 'Do senchus na fomorach' calls Ham the successor (*comarba*) of Cain. The formal parallels between

[42]John Carey, 'The Irish Vision of the Chinese', *Ériu*, 38 (1987), 72–78 (p. 73). The poem is edited by Kuno Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Texten', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 4 (1903), 234–40 (pp. 234–37, with the relevant glosses on p. 236). Carey convincingly rejects the translation of *Seiricda* as 'Syrian' found in *DIL*, p. 534, s.v. [43]*Lebor Gabála*, edited and translated by Macalister, V, 34–35, 52–53, and 76–77; see also John Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland* (Andover and Aberystwyth, 1999), p. 31. [44]*Saltair na Rann*, edited by Whitley Stokes (Oxford, 1883), lines 2517–20; translated and discussed by Carey, 'Irish Vision of the Chinese', pp. 78–79. [45]For instance, the *Book of Enoch*, Chapter 9, and the *Fragment of the Book of Noah*, Chapter 106, translated in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, edited by R. H. Charles, 2 vols (Oxford, 1913), II, 193 and 279; compare *Sex Aetates Mundi*, edited and translated by Ó Cróinín, §17, pp. 71 and 113, and §34, pp. 79 and 119, and see the comments of Emerson, 'Legends of Cain', p. 889; Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny I', p. 156. [46]See Williams, *Cain and Beowulf*, pp. 34–35. The tradition of the inscriptions of the antediluvian giants which survived the Flood can be found in eighth-century Hiberno-Latin texts and in the Middle Irish poem 'Dúan in choícat cest' (Meyer,

these two characters in biblical and exegetical texts were no doubt of principal importance in the substitution of Ham for Cain as the begetter of monsters, but the similarity of their names may have played its part: the form of Ham's name in medieval texts is regularly *C(h)am* which could become *Cain* through simple minim confusion. There is evidence of scribal confusion between the two names in, for instance, *Beowulf* and in some manuscripts of the eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on all the books of the Bible which Bernhard Bischoff dubbed the *Reference Bible*.[47] The eighth-century English scholar Alcuin seems to have completely confused Cain and Ham in his commentary on Genesis 6, and to have misled his pupil Hrabanus Maurus in the process.[48]

At any rate, the author of 'Do senchus na fomorach' was not the only medieval Irish scholar to favour Ham rather than Cain as the ancestor of the Fomorians, leprechauns, and other monsters. The poet Dublittir ua hUathgaile (fl. *c.* 1082 × 1116), author of the poem 'Rédig dam, a Dé do nim' ('Make easy for me, O God from heaven'), which is appended to the Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi* in most of the manuscripts, was another,[49] and this doctrine made its way into Recension C of *Lebor Gabála Érenn* in the form of glosses quoting 'Do senchus na fomorach'.[50] We can perhaps see an echo of this tradition in the genealogies in which the half-Fomorian Bres son of Elatha is descended from Ham according to *Genelach na Fomore*.[51] In the eighth-century Hiberno-Latin *Reference Bible* it is suggested that postdiluvian monsters were not the literal children of Ham, but were created by him using the magic arts taught to him by the progeny of Cain.[52] However, with this one rather peculiar exception, none of the extant Irish texts in which monsters are descended from Ham rather than from Cain are demonstrably independent of 'Do senchus na fomorach'. Thus its author seems to have been correct in his statement that the Irish believed in the descent of monsters from Cain. His alternative explanation clearly gained some currency, but it was not universally accepted. Charles Donahue went so far as to label him and his imitator Dublittir ua hUathgaile 'cranks on the subject of the Flood, members of a minority of historical rigorists, whose

'Mitteilungen aus irischen Texten', p. 236; Carney, *Studies*, p. 114, n. 1; see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 68). [47]See ibid., pp. 69 and 73. [48]See Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny II', pp. 194–95. [49]*Sex Aetates Mundi*, edited and translated by Ó Cróinín, §70, pp. 100 (lines 78–89) and 134. [50]*Lebor Gabála*, edited and translated by Macalister, I, 106–7 and 136–37. [51]*Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, I, edited by O'Brien, p. 330. [52]The relevant passage is quoted by James E. Cross, 'Towards the Identification of Old English Literary Ideas — Old Workings and New Seams', in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, edited by Paul E. Szarmach, Studies in Medieval Culture, 20 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), pp. 77–101 (pp. 92–93), and quoted and translated in Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 73.

theory never wholly imposed itself on Ireland'.[53] It was certainly not followed by the author of 'Cain and Abel'!

The exact relationship of the latter text with other traditions concerning the descendants of Cain is unclear, however. The author of the poem was evidently familiar with traditions, also attested in *Sex Aetates Mundi*, that leprechauns were among Cain's descendants, and the prose implicitly invokes the Fomorians mentioned in that text. The reference to Ambia, daughter of Cain, reminds us of Gilla Mo Dutu's mid-twelfth-century *Banshenchas*, the only other text to mention this character.[54] However, 'Cain and Abel' does not closely resemble either of these texts. Ambia, with her un-Irish-sounding name, seems to me to be a learned confection rather than a figure of native folklore, in which case there is almost certainly some textual connection between 'Cain and Abel' and the *Banshenchas*, but I do not think it possible to determine the nature of such a connection in the absence of a precise composition date for the former. Either text could have influenced the other, or both could have drawn independently on an unknown third text.

Whatever her origins, the portrayal of Ambia in 'Cain and Abel' is, I believe, the key to the second portion of the text, which provides an approach to the question of the existence of monsters after the Flood which is not inconsistent with their descent from Cain. Ambia is explicitly equally at home on land and in the water, having a fish's tail. In other words, she is a mermaid. The leprechauns and Fomorians descended from her and a passing trout must likewise have been aquatic and thus able to survive the Flood which would have destroyed the other offspring of Cain.[55] That some of Cain's offspring were aquatic is implicit elsewhere. We might note in passing

[53]'Grendel and the *Clanna Cain*', p. 172. This is quoted approvingly by John Kelleher, who nonetheless adds 'I wouldn't say they were cranks. They were just bothered by the illogicality of monsters and oddities descended from Cain surviving the Flood' (unpublished letter dated August 1977, quoted by Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny II', p. 193, n. 68). [54]Dobbs, 'Ban-Shenchus', pp. 290 and 316. Here she is the begetter of monsters (*torathair*), but there is no suggestion that she herself is monstrous. Her name is opaque, but as Dr Mahon points out to me, it bears a superficial resemblance to Greek *amphibios*, used of animals which live both on land and in the water ('amphibians'), which would perfectly describe the Ambia of 'Cain and Abel' (who 'could travel the sea and the land'). It is also reminiscent of *ambuae* 'foreigner, outlaw' and **ambéo* '?un-dead' (attested only in the genitive singular or nominative plural form *ambí*; see *DIL*, s.v. *ambí*), but while these comparisons might well have fired the imagination of a medieval Irish etymologist, they do not help us with the provenance of the name. [55]A gloss to the Middle Irish poem 'Dúan in choícat cest' lists fish (*na bratána*) among the 'peoples' (*túatha*) not drowned by the Flood (Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', p. 236; cf. Carey, 'Irish Vision of the Chinese', p. 74). This might seem self-evident, but note that early Jewish texts also applied themselves to the question of the fate of fish

that the lair of Grendel and his mother in the Old English *Beowulf* can only be reached by an arduous swim in monster-infested water.[56] Superficially more promising is a reference in the version of *Sex Aetates Mundi* found in the late-fourteenth-century Book of Lecan to *na murduchaind muridi* 'the sea mermaids' in a list of Cain's descendants.[57] These creatures can hardly be traced back to the original text, however, featuring as they do in an expanded list which owes a considerable debt to Isidore of Seville's list of monsters (including *sirenas* — *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.30).

However, leprechauns (*luchorpáin*, *luchoirp*, *lupruchán*, *lupruchánaig*, etc.) have aquatic connections in a number of early Irish texts. In *Echtra Fergusa maic Léiti* ('The Adventure of Fergus mac Léiti'), the *luchorpáin*, in what may be their earliest extant appearance in Irish literature, seem to live beside, or perhaps even in, the sea, and bestow upon Fergus the ability to go underwater in lakes and seas, either by means of magic herbs or a magic cloak.[58] The early Irish glossaries also give them an aquatic connection, explaining the name *luchorp* as *oirb locha* 'the heir to a lake'.[59] In fact it means 'little body'. In the poem 'Rédig dam, a Dé do nim' by Dublittir ua hUathgaile there may be an explicit reference to the aquatic nature of the *luchorpáin* who are described as *lerda*. This is translated as 'maritime' by James Carney, taking it to be a derivative of *ler* 'sea',[60] but Dáibhí Ó Cróinín translates 'numerous', taking it to be derived from *ler* 'great number'.[61] Leprechauns are not connected with water in modern folklore, as a rule, but the following tradition, recorded by P. W. Joyce is intriguing, in the light of the leprechauns' ancestry in 'Cain and Abel':

during the Flood: while the fourth-century Babylonian Talmud specified that fish were exempt from the destruction of the Flood, the basically fifth-century Midrash Rabbah reports that fish were originally among the animals ordained to be gathered into the Ark but that they escaped (Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny II', pp. 186–87 and references). [56]But Mellinkoff comments that they 'are not portrayed as fish-like creatures. And in fact they live in a water-free shelter' ('Cain's Monstrous Progeny I', p. 151). [57]See *The Book of Lecan*, edited by Kathleen Mulchrone (Dublin, 1937), fol. 24^{v}, col. b, line 34; quoted by Carney, *Studies*, p. 108. [58]D. A. Binchy, 'The Saga of Fergus Mac Léti', *Ériu*, 16 (1952), 33–48. [59]Whitley Stokes, 'O'Mulconry's Glossary', *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie*, I (1900), 232–324, no. 795; cf. *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, edited by Binchy, p. 616.40a [= *Dúil Dromma Cetta*[1]]; ibid, p. 1074b.40 [= *Dúil Dromma Cetta*[2]]; Paul Russell, '*Dúil Dromma Cetta* and Cormac's Glossary', *Études celtiques*, 32 (1996), 147–74 (p. 167, no. 32) [= *Dúil Dromma Cetta*[3]]; ibid., p. 168, no. 30 [= *Dúil Dromma Cetta*[4]]. For these references, and those in n. 64 below, I am indebted to the concordances on the website of the Early Irish Glossaries Project of the University of Cambridge, created by Paul Russell, Sharon Arbuthnot, and Pádraic Moran (http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/irishglossaries/). [60]*Studies*, p. 109. [61]*Sex Aetates Mundi*, p. 134, cf. *DIL*, p. 429, s.v. *lerda*.

> There is a good sized lake in Donegal, four miles west of Ardara, called Lough Nalughraman, the lake of the *loughrymans* [i.e. *lochramáin*, a variant of *leipreacháin*]: but here the people say the *loughryman* is a kind of trout [!].[62]

This is almost certainly a coincidence, however. The term *lochramán* developed a secondary meaning of 'puny creature': in Achill, Co. Mayo, *luchramán* means 'fledgling'.[63] The trout of Lough Nalughraman are probably called *lochramáin* simply because they are small creatures.

The modern leprechaun, then, is predominantly an inhabitant of *terra firma*, whatever about his medieval ancestors. The term *abac*, however, which is used interchangeably with *luchorp(án)* in *Echtra Fergusa maic Léiti*, certainly has aquatic connotations. It is derived by the glossarians from *ab* 'river' and *bec* 'little'.[64] This etymology is partially correct: *abac* (cognate with Welsh *afanc* 'aquatic monster, beaver' and Breton *avank* 'dwarf, sea monster') derives from Celtic **abankos* 'riverine', hence 'aquatic'.[65] It seems plausible that the *abac* was originally a Celtic water deity. We could compare the mysterious images of hooded dwarfs known as *genii cucullati* which occur frequently at sacred springs in Roman Britain as well as in contemporary Gaul and western Germany.[66] The term *luchorp(án)* 'little body' may originally have been a nickname, due to a naming taboo or the like (compare euphemisms such as 'the little people').

[62]P. W. Joyce, *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, I, seventh edition (Dublin, 1910), p. 190; see the discussion by Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, 'An Leipreachán san Ainmníocht', *Béaloideas*, 50 (1982), 126–50 (pp. 131–32). [63]Gerard Stockman, *The Irish of Achill, Co. Mayo* (Belfast, 1974), p. 375. [64]*Sanas Cormaic*, edited by Kuno Meyer, second edition (Felinfach, 1994), no. 83; Stokes, 'O'Mulconry's Glossary', no. 3; *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, edited by Binchy, p. 621.6–7 [= *Dúil Dromma Cetta*[1]]. [65]Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* (Halle, 1921), p. 64, n. 3; *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, edited by R. J. Thomas and others, 3 vols (Cardiff, 1950–2002), I, 41, s.v. *afanc*; *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien*, edited by J. Vendryes and others (Paris and Dublin, 1959-), A-5, s.v. *abac*; Eric P. Hamp, 'Varia XXVI: Early Irish *abacc*', *ÉC*, 24 (1987), 185; Antone Minard, 'Colorful Monsters: The *Afanc* in Medieval Welsh Narrative', in *Myth in Celtic Literatures*, edited by Joseph Falaky Nagy, CSANA Yearbook, 6 (Dublin, 2007), pp. 120–31 (p. 128); Ranko Matasović, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic*, Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series, 9 (Leiden, 2009), pp. 23–24, s.v. **abon-*. In a recent publication, however, Eric P. Hamp states baldly that *abac* and *afanc* etc. are of 'dubious relation' ('Varia III: On Carnian Celtic *en* for **ṇ*', *Ériu*, 54 (2004), 257–58 (p. 257)). He does not specify his reason for this apparent change of mind, but note that a question mark appears beside *abacc* in the entry for *afanc* in the second edition of *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, edited by Gareth A. Bevan and others (Cardiff, 2003-), p. 95. [66]See, for instance, Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (Godalming, 1986), pp. 154–55 and 157–58. The possible relevance of the *genii cucullati* was suggested to me by Dr Mahon, who also provided me with this

It is not clear whether or not the Fomorians (*fomoiri*, *fomoraig*) were originally aquatic monsters. The element *fo-* is certainly from Celtic **wo* 'under, sub-' (cf. the Old Irish preposition *fo* 'under'). Whitley Stokes proposed that the second element was cognate with the second element in English *nightmare*, that is, a malicious supernatural entity or demon, and this etymology has been widely accepted.[67] Perhaps the name *fomoire* originally meant 'demon from below', that is, from the Otherworld. In some texts, the Fomorians seem to hail from beneath the ground — in an archaic (looking) Leinster genealogical poem, they are said to come from meadows (*srathu*) beneath the worlds of men (*fo dōene domnaib*).[68] However, in view of the fact that early Irish tradition places the Otherworld beneath lakes or the sea as well as under ground, Doris Edel's translation 'subterranean demons' seems to be too narrow.[69] The name *fomoire* was certainly open to interpretation as a derivative of *fo* 'under' + *muir* 'sea' by medieval etymologists (note that Ambia conceives Fomoir and his siblings *fon muir* 'under the sea' in our text!). Indeed, as recently as 1886, John Rhys interpreted *fomoiri* as '*submarini*', although he subsequently accepted Stokes's derivation.[70] However, in the light of later portrayals of Fomorians as pirates, the extant medieval and early modern texts, while understanding the second element of *fomoire* as *muir* 'sea', tend to understand *fo* in its secondary meaning of 'about, around'. *Fomoire* is glossed as *fo mhuiri* 'about seas' in the late Middle Irish text *Cóir Anmann* ('The Fitness of Names'), while Geoffrey Keating has *Fomhóraigh, .i. fo mhuiribh* 'Fomhóraigh, *i.e.* along the seas'.[71] At any rate, whether or not they were originally envisaged as dwelling

reference. [67]Whitley Stokes, 'The Second Battle of Moytura', *RC*, 12 (1891), 52–130 (p. 128). See also Thurneysen, *Irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 64; John Carey, 'Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory', in *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration: Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, edited by Doris Edel (Dublin, 1995), pp. 45–60 (pp. 50–51)); cf. *Lexique*, edited by Vendryes and others, M-64, s.v. *morrígan* for another possible derivative of this element in Irish. [68]*Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, I, edited by O'Brien, p. 20. Note that the Book of Leinster reads *for* in place of *fo*! [69]Doris Edel, *The Celtic West and Europe: Studies in Celtic Literature and the Early Irish Church* (Dublin, 2001), p. 203. On the location of the Otherworld in the earliest Irish texts, see John Carey, 'The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition', *Éigse*, 19 (1982–83), 36–43; idem, 'Ireland and the Antipodes: The Heterodoxy of Virgil of Salzburg', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 1–10 (both reprinted in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, edited by Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin, 2000), pp. 113–19 and 133–42 respectively). [70]Rhys, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, pp. 591–93. Contrast John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1901), I, 286. Note that Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin calques *fomoiri* as 'possibly meaning the People from under the Sea': *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature* (Dublin, 2009), p. 32. [71]*Cóir*

beneath it, the Fomorians are often connected with the sea in early Irish literature.[72] Perhaps a native tradition of sub-aquatic Otherwordly giants can be glimpsed in an obscure reference in the late-seventh-century Hiberno-Latin hymn 'Altus Prosator' ('The Exalted Creator'). Here we encounter *gigantes* tormented beneath the waters (*sub aquis*) in Hell.[73] An underwater Hell seems like a Christian interpretation of a native sub-aquatic Otherworld. As we have seen, the Irish Otherworld is sometimes located under lakes or the sea, but I am unaware of an early Christian tradition of an underwater Hell.[74] Could the hymn's sub-aquatic *gigantes* be relatives of the Fomorians?

At any rate, whether the connection of Fomorians with the sea was primary or secondary, the author of 'Cain and Abel' was in no way out of step with tradition in his suggestion that they and the leprechauns were sea-dwellers. He was, however, uniquely explicit in giving them an aquatic ancestor. I suspect that he was attempting his own explanation of the apparently impossible Irish belief that postdiluvian monsters such as *luchorpáin* and *fomóraig* were the offspring of Cain. Unlike the author of 'Do senchus na fomorach', he succeeded in drawing on pre-existing material to provide an elegant solution to the not inconsiderable problem of their surviving a Flood sent explicitly to destroy them.[75]

Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Tract on Personal Names, edited and translated by Sharon Arbuthnot, 2 volumes, ITS, 59 and 60 (London, 2005–7), I, 178 and 185; Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: The History of Ireland*, edited and translated by David Comyn and P. S. Dinneen, 4 volumes, ITS, 4, 8, 9, 15 (London, 1902–14), I, 182–83. An alternative explanation offered in *Cóir Anmann* is that *fo-* = *fó* 'good', which recalls the explanation in other versions of this text of *fomòraig* as *fo-muiridi* 'good mariners' (*Cóir Anmann*, edited and translated by Arbuthnot, I, 105 and 142, and II, 63 and 135). [72]See, for instance, *Fomora fairge* 'of the Fomoire of the sea', *Lebor Gabála*, edited and translated by Macalister, III, 174–75, poem xli, stanza 23. [73]*King of Mysteries: Early Irish Religious Writings*, edited by John Carey (Dublin, 2000), pp. 39–40. [74]According to the poem 'Dúan in choícat cest', a third of Hell is in the air, a third in the earth, and a third in the sea (Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', p. 235; compare the riddle contained in the first part of Dublin, Trinity College, MS H.3.18, edited by John Carey, 'Where Is Hell?', *Béaloideas*, 50 (1982), 42–43). Carey interprets this as a reference to traditions about fairies which were originally fallen angels who did not reach Hell, but whose infernal nature has polluted the sea, air, and land in which they now dwell. It certainly does not seem to be a reference to an underwater Hell of the sort present in 'Altus Prosator'. [75]A version of this paper was read at a seminar in Aberystwyth University on 9 December 2009. I am grateful to all who commented on it at the time or subsequently. I am particularly grateful to Dr William J. Mahon for drawing my attention to this text and for discussing various aspects of it with me. I alone am responsible for the conclusions drawn and for any remaining errors, however.